

SWOSU Biology Course Cited as Best Practice

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The Southwestern Oklahoma State University Department of Biological Sciences in Weatherford was recently informed that its general education course, Biological Concepts, was identified as an example of best practices in a national study of biology courses conducted by the Center for Educational Policy Research (CEPR) on behalf of the College Board.

A total of 149 courses from across the nation were reviewed. SWOSU biology instructor Sue Ball compiled the required information for SWOSU and submitted the report to the CEPR.

“This report took considerable time, energy, and effort that Ms. Ball put into providing us the requested information, a task that took some considerable time for instructors to complete,” said Dr. David Conley, director of the CEPR. “Without instructor participation of this nature, we would have been unable to complete the study successfully.”

The study sought to identify best practices college courses that could inform the redesign of Advanced Placement (AP) courses in biology. The goal of the redesign process is to ensure that AP courses reflect the best of college teaching.

To identify best practices courses, CEPR assembled a panel of national experts to analyze top courses from a wide range of institutions. The panel reviewed the nominated courses and identified the critical components of best practices present in each course. The College Board then convened a commission in biology to develop new AP course descriptions, new AP exam specifications and professional development guidelines for AP teachers.

The commission, which is meeting over the current academic year, will utilize the study's findings as a key resource to fulfill its charge. The final result of the commission's work will be AP courses that closely reflect the best practices of college courses in biology.